DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 054 147 TE 002 536

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TITLE Simulated Classroom Instruction: A Microteaching-Contract Approach.
PUB DATE Dec 70
NOTE 5p.; Speech given at Annual Meeting of Speech Communication Association (56th, New Orleans, December 1970); reprinted in "Proceedings of the First Conference of Illinois Supervisors of Student Teachers in the Arts," Jan 1972
AVAILABLE FROM "Proceedings" available from Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Curriculum Development and Services, 316 S. 2nd St., Springfield, Ill. 62706, free, limited supply

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Behavioral Objectives, *Laboratory Training, *Simulated Environment, *Speech Instruction, Student Teacher Relationship, *Teacher Behavior, *Teacher Education

ABSTRACT

The Speech Education Department of Northwestern University is placing strong emphasis on a Simulated Classroom Instruction course designed to aid students in developing a philosophy of teaching and an understanding of themselves as teachers, specifically speech teachers. The course is intended to give potential speech teachers opportunities to: (1) Gain insight into their decision to teach while building a personal philosophy of teaching; (2) Increase their ability to observe and analyze student and teacher behavior in learning situations; (3) Try alternative teaching behaviors to aid real and simulated classes to reach certain goals; (4) Identify and analyze their own strengths, weaknesses, and preferences for various teaching behaviors according to specified learning situations; and (5) Prepare and execute strategies for strengthening personal weaknesses of teacher behavior on an individualized basis. The program has now entered a third phase in which greater synthesis of readings and behavior is attained coupled with a new emphasis on the effects of teacher behavior on "learner" behaviors. (Author/DB)

ED054147

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Simulated Classroom Instruction: A Microteaching - Contract Approach

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Harold Taylor states, "Preparing to become a teacher is like preparing to become a poet",[1] because the preparation begins in the decision to become something, a commitment made about one's own life and the purpose of it. In today's educational realm a sense of commitment or purpose is rarely cultivated. College students are given a plethora of university offerings and are urged to "sample" many areas. A sense of "knowledge of information" is stressed but developing a sense of purpose, or commitment to a field, is not emphasized.

The history of teacher education reveals that until recently a teacher was considered to be a "transmitter of knowledge." The teacher said something and the student put it on his paper, and occasionally, in his head. The current environment is no longer healthy for the "teacher-transmitter." Increasing technological development, awareness of processes, and sophistication of young people, have contributed to an educational climate, which, coupled with a teacher surplus, has increased the demand for the high quality teachers with a philosophical commitment to, and psychological understanding of, the process of education. Thus, our students must be students of teaching as well as students of speech, art or music.

The Speech Education Department of Northwestern University is placing strong emphasis on a Simulated Classroom Instruction course designed to aid students in developing a philosophy of teaching and an understanding of themselves as teachers, specifically speech teachers. The field of teacher education has stressed the laboratory approach as an alternative to the observation-student teaching approach to teacher preparation. Our program provides a carefully planned laboratory experience in cooperation with public school speech departments dedicated to helping prepare teachers for our profession.

Simulated Classroom Instruction is a program apart from the speech methods course (although some schools may provide these experiences through their methods program). It is designed to give potential speech teachers opportunities to:

1. Gain insight into their own decision to teach while building a personal philosophy of teaching;
2. Increase their ability to observe and analyze student and teacher behavior in learning situations;
3. Try alternative teaching behaviors to aid real and simulated classes to reach certain goals;
4. Identify and analyze their own strengths, weaknesses and preferences for various teaching behaviors according to specified learning situations;
5. Prepare and execute strategies for strengthening personal weaknesses of teacher behavior on an individualized basis.

The course was initiated in 1969 and has actually passed through three phases which will be explained after a brief description of the key concepts of microteaching, behavioral objectives and student learning contracts.

1. "Microteaching" is defined by its proponent, Dwight Allen, as a scaled-down <u>real</u> teaching encounter."[2] Microteaching assumes there are identifiable teacher behaviors which can be isolated and developed as a skill. Some of these include: questioning, set induction, reinforcement, use of examples, silence, etc.) Essentially, microteaching allows teachers to apply these skills to carefully prepared lessons in a series of short encounters with a small group of real students while observed by a supervisor. After the initial teaching encounter and supervisory conference the teacher modifies or re-prepares his approach and very shortly "re-teaches" the same lesson to different real students. This cycical process may be repeated as often as necessary or desirable. Video and audio tapes are often used to record the teaching encounter and played back during the supervisory critique session.
2. Behavioral Objectives are an outgrowth of the philosophy that "learning is represented by a change in behavior", and represent a specific method of determining observable behavior goals for learning situations. They indicate: 1) what is to be learned, 2) how well it is to be learned, 3) how the learning is to be evaluated. In short, they specify behaviors which will be evident or observable if something has been learned.[3]
3. Student Learning Contracts are a method of pre-determined student-teacher agreement on specific learning outcomes for a particular student. Usually, students "agree" to perform specified behaviors as stated in a contract related to the assignment.

   The contract may include the following:

   a. content classification - places behavior in curriculum
   b. purpose - why material in contract is valuable

c. criterion performance - how well the student must perform
d. test situation - how student must perform
e. resources - materials available for student use
f. taxonomy category - place in Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive and Affective Learning.[4]

A contract may be created in the following manner:

a. teacher written - teacher assigned
b. teacher written - student assigned
c. student written - student assigned

Phase one of the course's development began in 1969 with a relatively traditional microteaching approach combined with readings in philosophies of teaching and behavioral objectives. All students had required reading and were required to participate in microteaching sessions where they all worked on the same skill, such as reinforcement. We used college peers and "real" high school students as "learners". As a result of this approach, university students had a compartmentalized knowledge of some educational philosophy, how to write behavioral objectives, and had experienced a range of specified teaching behaviors. The situation was not conduscive to an obvious interrelationship of the specific types of learning. Individualized needs in terms of teaching behavior were not given extensive attention in the traditional microteaching approach and concern was focused heavily on the "teacher's behavior" but not on the "learner's behavior."

Near the end of the term the concept of student contracts was introduced and phase two of development began. Each student analyzed his needs, on the basis of readings, experiences and a review of previous videotapes, and created a contract for himself related to teaching behaviors he wished to develop. For example, one student believed he needed to develop his skill in asking different levels of questions. He created a learning contract, based on a sample given to the class and provided the supervisor with his final objectives, evaluative criteria, and a description of means to be used to reach the objectives. He set levels of criteria for grades of A, B and C and carefully specified behaviors for each level.

The following is a description of the steps all students passed through. After each student saw his videotapes and created his contract he had a supervisory conference to "pass-on contract." (Joint contract evaluation session based only on contract criteria not selection of content area). Students then had

two weeks to prepare for the final evaluative session, during which time they could use videotape equipment at certain practice hours or any other department facilities. The supervisors provided general instructions, showed initial videotapes, (diagnostic sessions), held open conference time and conferences to pass on contract, ran equipment for practice time and held final evaluative sessions. Until the final session they acted only as resources, remained non-directive and made no attempt to evaluate the procedures.

Thus, in phase two students were able to work directly on individual concerns based partly on readings and past performance and were able to create behavioral objectives for themselves. Yet, this approach contained difficulties. The sample contracts, and hence the student contracts, were extremely specific and exacting, thus, forcing very unrealistic rehearsals and final evaluative sessions. Emphasis continued to focus exclusively on teacher behavior with no concern for "student" behavioral change. The time required of the supervisors was triple the usual class load hours.

The program has now entered a third phase in which greater synethesis of readings and behavior is attained coupled with a new emphasis on the effects of teacher behavior on "learner" behaviors.

In the new program, the university students collectively investigate the range of possible teacher behavior and determine possible skills or behaviors that should result in certain kinds of learning behavior. This is accomplished through readings, discussions, observations, demonstrations and some traditional microteaching. Eventually, students develop modified contracts adjusted to individual needs and preferences but the focus is on the behavior expected of the "learners" as a result of certain teaching behaviors. In short, teaching behavior is no longer the end but the means to an end of desired learner behavior.

In phase three contracts are more loosely designed to permit incorporation of a range of teaching skills geared to reaching a specific learner behavioral goal. Although the re-teach concept is still utilized it is now frequently seen as a way to encourage students to design two or three different teaching behaviors or combinations of behaviors, to reach learning behaviors for their "students". Thus, a teacher may use behaviors related to lecture, as contrasted to group discussion to determine for him which method is most effective to bring learners to a certain point. Teaching periods may extend from five to

thirty-five minutes depending on the objectives and behaviors specified. Class members are encouraged to create their own repetoire of teacher behaviors, for example, a behavior of determining class knowledge of a subject prior to teaching it. Sometimes initial teaching encounters will occur on campus followed by a re-teach session in a local high school. We are only beginning to discover the problems in phase three and as these discoveries materialize we hope to move on to phase four of Simulated Classroom Instruction.

Thus, over a period of time we have attempted to develop laboratory experiences for our speech education undergraduates which will encourage them to examine the area of teaching on a theoretical and practical level and to begin to build a philosophical commitment to, and psychological understanding of, the process of education. And perhaps, as the committed poet is a dedicated artist, so, too, will the committed teacher be a dedicated artist.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Charles Silberman, Crisis in the Classroom (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 185, quoting Harold Taylor The World and the American Teacher (Washington D.C., The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1968).

[2]Dwight Allen, Micro-Teaching, A Description (Stanford, California: Stanford Teacher Education Program, 1967). (There are many articles by Dwight Allen on this subject).

[3]Robert Mager, Preparing Instructional Objectives Palo Alto: Fearon Publishers, 1962).

[4]Thorwold Esbensen, Working With Individualized Instruction)Palo Alto: Fearon Publishers, 1968), p. 9.

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